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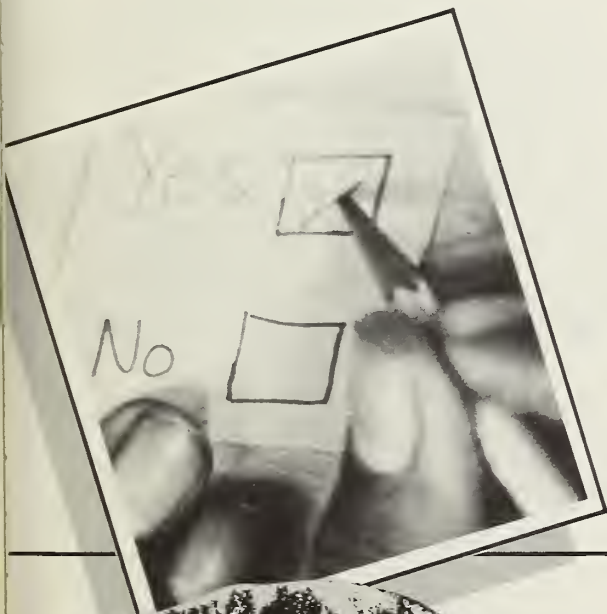
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Let's Work on School Lunch and Breakfast

This issue is full of information on how parents, students, teachers and school administrators have gotten involved and improved school lunch and breakfast programs.

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Not a Problem? Call Out the Kids!

Looking for ways to reduce food waste, a Portland, Maine, school principal decided to ask students for some help. When a schoolwide experiment was complete, food waste had been cut just about in half. **Page 13**

Let's Work on School



The 1970's saw some changes in people's attitudes toward food, and signs of the changes are everywhere.

The health food co-op down the street, the bran bread and yogurt on the market

shelves, the nutrition column in the paper, and the new concern about dietary guidelines all show that more and more of us are asking questions about what we eat. A growing interest in school meals is yet another sign.

"What kind of food are our children eating?" we hear concerned parents and others ask. "And how much are they eating? How much are they throwing away?" Fortunately, some also ask, "What can we do to help?"

Some school food service staffs have been working for several years with interested parents and students. Their experiences have shown that the involvement of parents and students can make a big difference in the success of a school food service operation.

Here's a sampling of what parents, students, teachers and community leaders can do, have done, or are doing — on their own or together — to improve school lunch and breakfast programs and increase the nutrition awareness of children.

Breakfast is an area in which parents can have a dramatic impact. In many areas, parents have played a large part in popularizing school breakfasts and turning community interest into action.

Anti-hunger activists, including many parents as well as community groups and elected city officials, built solid support for school breakfasts in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where the program had been abandoned in 1976 as too costly and difficult to operate. Because the groups were able to show that the program was feasible, it was reinstated this fall.

Churches and religious groups can also be powerful forces in nutrition. In Cleveland, where the breakfast program in 43 schools showed a deficit of \$232,000, researchers from the Greater Cleveland Interchurch Council determined that the deficit was due to restrictive school board regulations. The council convinced the board that the program could pay for itself under altered rules. The changes were made, and the board subsequently installed the program in all of the city's 147 schools.

Oakland, California, schools serve a full "convenience food" breakfast (includes 1 ounce of protein equivalent of meat or meat alternate, such as cheese, eggs or peanut butter). Weekly breakfast menu sheets, which include a nutrition lesson, go out to the students. The program's good participation is attributed in large part to the parents, many of whom bring their children to school early.

Lunch and Breakfast

Burlington City and Alamance County, North Carolina, schools have been awarded Federal grants to involve parents in their lunch programs. Most of the money will go into instructional materials given out at seminars on such topics as weight control, "cooking to the pace of 1980," and developments in nutrition.

The city schools will also print flyers to insert in their monthly newsletter, and form a committee of 22 parents—2 each from the 11 schools—to meet four times during the school year to discuss food service improvements.

The Jamestown, North Dakota, public schools have involved parents in school lunch by mailing special luncheon invitations, accompanied by an evaluation sheet, to 8 to 10 parents a week. Parents can see whether the lunchroom is meeting their children's needs—and principals have found a side benefit: the presence of parents reduces noise.

Five schools in Fayetteville, North Carolina, last year sponsored a nutrition week that included classroom activities in reading, spelling, health, science, art, English, social studies, music, and math. Students saw a play and films on nutrition, and had a poster contest whose winning entries in each grade were displayed at a local shopping mall. Food fairs highlighted the week with displays and samples of many foods. Tables were staffed by parent volunteers.

Physical education can be profitably tied into nutrition education. In Somerville, Massachusetts, one school organized a mini-Olympics in which students could test their strength and endurance. Students also went into the community to interview women about sports, in

connection with a chapter on women athletes in one of their nutrition education texts. In schools where there is a communication gap between the academic staff and the physical education staff, a special effort can pay off in making the playing field another nutrition "learning laboratory."

Some situations are tailor-made for direct involvement of students with their own meals. Culinary program students in vocational schools usually prepare meals for the rest of the student body. At the Fanning Trade School in Worcester, Massachusetts, food department students served a breakfast buffet featuring a panoply of the previous year's most successful breakfast foods—and increased the school's overall participation in the breakfast program by 30 percent.

Other schools make a special effort to involve children who are developmentally disabled. Whether it is part of the vocational program or these children's regular curriculum, letting them prepare or help with meals is a valuable learning experience. Baking, salad making, measuring, handling kitchen equipment and appliances, and cleanup are areas in which special education students can both contribute and learn useful skills.

Letting students grow a food, or involving the community in obtaining it, is an excellent spark for a nutrition education chain reaction—one that can be truly advantageous to schools, as a Concord, New Hampshire, district found. The district built—under the school superintendent's office—a root cellar that the food service staff fills with local produce. They save money and boost the local economy at the same time. (See the February 1980 issue of *Food and Nutrition*.)

Students learn about the foods stored in the cellar by growing some themselves in several small gardens cared for as class projects. Most children will take pride in, and try, foods they have raised themselves.

Current community or consumer issues, such as ecology, local water quality, or the use of chemical additives in foods, can also help get the community into the school food service arena. In the course of learning to make paper from food scraps as an ecology project, third grade students in Denver became concerned about the amount of food wasted in the cafeteria. They kept track of waste for a week, used encyclopedias to research nutrition and vitamins, and wrote, directed, and produced a play called "The Wizard of Food," which their families and the entire student body were invited to see. The class also presented the results of their plate-waste study and promised surprises for schoolmates who cleaned their plates at lunch.

by Christopher Kocsis

To hear the
Mean Queen
tell it...



Few things will absorb and delight a child as much as a flight of the imagination, and dramas—built on nutrition themes, with appropriate heroes, villains, and tense situations—are ideal teaching tools. Rhode Island offers a good example of this approach with its 10 plays for preschool to grade 3 children.

The plays were created by two actors who, inspired by a nutrition

drama project in Maine, approached the Rhode Island Department of Education for funding. Interested, the State agency granted the actors funding through USDA's Nutrition Education and Training Program (NET). Participating schools have been delighted with the results.

The plays, which are principally acted by the authors but also include several children, were presented at 34 elementary schools and 20 child care centers last year. They will probably be presented at 30 or 35 more schools this year. Some of the play titles and their subjects are:

The Mean Queen Who Would Eat No Green: Too many sweets contribute to obesity and dental caries. Carrots, celery, and other "detergent" foods help keep teeth and gums healthy. And, variety in diet—as all the plays stress—is important.

The Story of the Kingdom of the Root Vegetables: Vegetables contain many nutrients, and also add color and variety to meals.

The Old Magician and the Wonderful Bird of Weir: There are many different ethnic foods and tastes. Geography and availability influence food preferences.

Super Zip, Super Zoom, and the Hungry Space Travelers: Carbohydrates are the body's main fuel.

The Indian Sunrise Legend: The importance of starting the day with breakfast is illustrated by the plight of members of a tribe who were unable to make the sun rise because they hadn't eaten breakfast.

Joining the children in the audience are food service personnel and teachers. Teachers receive a resource manual that describes each play's contents and story line, and suggests followup activities. There is also a home activity sheet for parents.

Both parents and teachers have taken part in surveys conducted at several schools. Parents answer such questions as: "Did the children remember the plays? Were there any changes in their eating habits? Did they ask more questions about food and request more nutritious snacks?" Response has been very positive, with a majority of the parents reporting some impact.

One school district also did pre- and post-presentation testing, and found that students who had seen the plays improved their test scores significantly.

Above: Actors Marilyn Meardon and Len Cabral perform **The Indian Sunrise Legend** for children at a Rhode Island day care center. The lesson: eating breakfast can help you be strong, healthy and energetic.

Teens are teachers in Connecticut classrooms

Teen teaching has become a popular way to teach nutrition in Connecticut. Through the State's Nutrition Education and Training Program, selected teenage students are trained to present a nutrition curriculum to lower grades. Not only do the younger children benefit, but the teens who are involved also tend to improve their eating habits.

The school system and the teachers decide what lower grades they want to reach. Selected teenage students, usually between eighth and eleventh grades, then receive eight 40-minute lessons. They also share their training with the food service staff, with emphasis on improved menu planning, preparation, and presentation. Even after the lessons are over, teen teachers receive support and on-the-job training from the NET training staff.

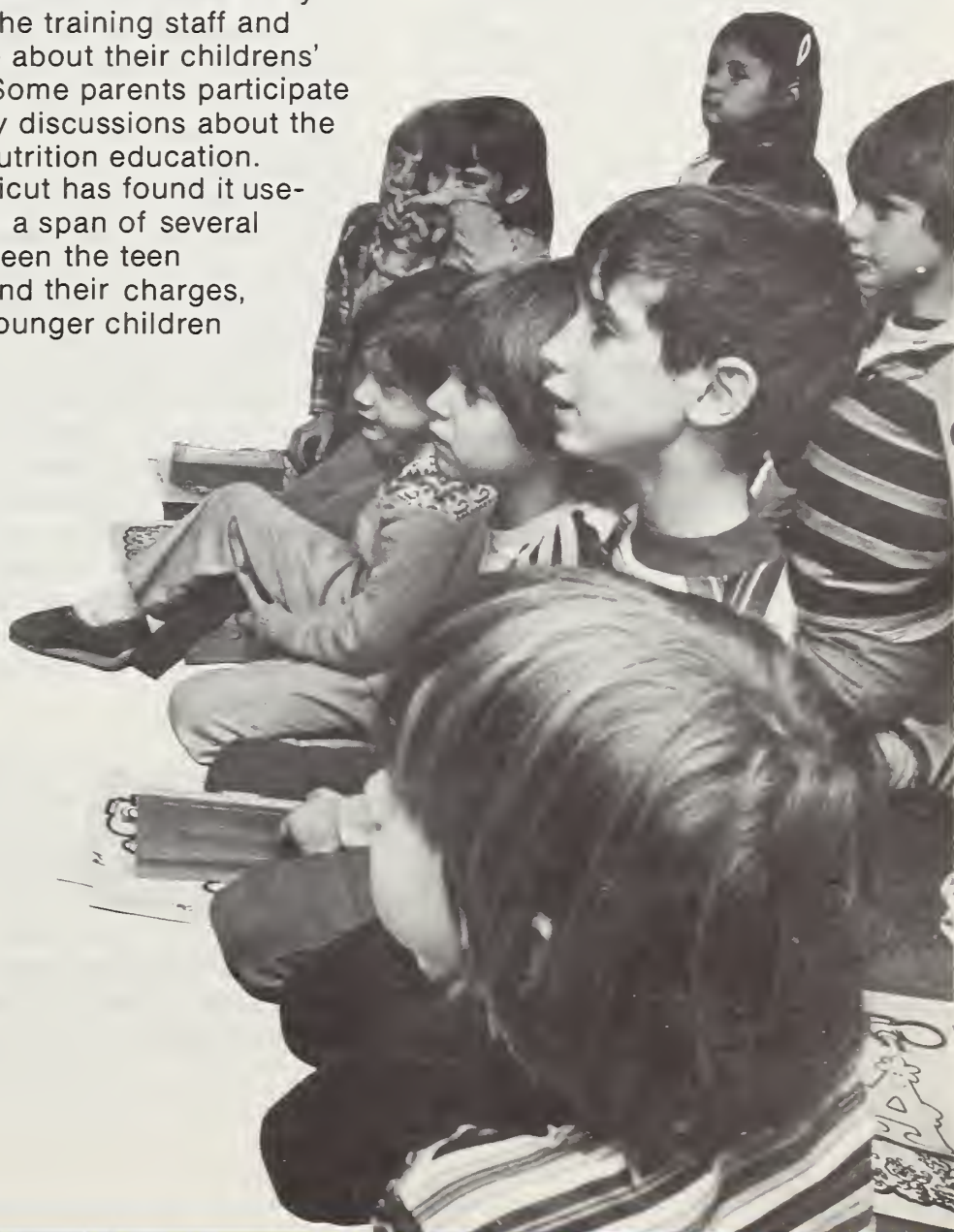
In the classrooms, teens turn nutrition education into fun with the help of puppets, games, handouts, and food characters. Says Janine Czajkowski, of the University of Connecticut's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, "Many of the younger children look forward to those days. We've had some parents say that their children don't want to miss school on the days their teen teachers are coming."

Parents become involved in several ways. For example, letters go to parents of potential teen teachers asking permission for them to participate. There is also a newsletter for parents. And schools encourage parents to attend school food and health fairs where they can meet the training staff and learn more about their children's nutrition. Some parents participate in the early discussions about the need for nutrition education.

Connecticut has found it useful to keep a span of several years between the teen teachers and their charges, because younger children

are more attentive to older students. But the State has developed nutrition "modules" for secondary students that center around teenage problems and teenage lifestyles. The modules are designed to fit into such classes as home economics, health, biology, family living, and child development.

There is a "snacking" module tailored to help teens make informed choices from fast foods and snacks. An energy module relates energy to fitness and weight control. Another module addresses food budgeting. There is also one on teen pregnancy and lactation. All the modules were designed with student input, testing, and subsequent revision.



One parent shares her experiences



Linda Israel, a parent in Cinnaminson, New Jersey, pursued an interest in the food her children were getting at school—and became a nutrition activist. She founded, and remains the nucleus of, a task force to examine the place of nutrition in the township's four public schools.

"I started doing this about 5 years ago, when my son was in first grade," Israel told us. "I was very disenchanted with the school lunch, and I always baked my own bread to make sandwiches for him, but he wanted to eat what was served at school.

"I also didn't let him buy any of the snacks they served, when children were allowed to go up after lunch and buy something. I never gave him money for anything, and

he was unhappy because here he was, bringing strange-looking bread from home that wasn't the soft white bread other children had.

"I know what it feels like to be different when you're a child," she sympathizes, "so I let him buy lunch and stopped making my own bread."

Instead, she decided to get involved and work for positive changes in the school's lunch program. She joined the PTA, began collecting literature on nutrition, and learned what parents were doing in other parts of the country.

Inspired by other groups

She was especially inspired by what a group of women in Hartsdale, New York, had accomplished with very strong, interested citizen support. Among other things, they hired a management service that better met their needs, eliminated food they considered inappropriate, and made a movie on improving school lunch programs. Israel also visited a lunch contractor in Princeton, who published a nutrition newsletter for the schools he serviced.

That newsletter stimulated her task force into founding their own, called *Food for Thought*. It is an interesting compendium of recipes, food tips, school food highlights, and short articles on nutrition. There are actually two editions: a monthly one that elementary students carry home, with lunch menus printed on the back; and a more irregular one that goes out with other mailings to the parents of students in the middle and high schools.

Israel tries to publish different information in the different editions. "There are many families with kids in one, two, or three of the schools," she explains, "and if it

looked like the same information, I think parents would discard the newsletter rather than read it."

Nick Pascale, who serves on the task force both as a teacher and a parent, says, "People are very interested in getting the newsletter because it includes so much information. Mrs. Israel is very knowledgeable about nutrition, and she has had many home economists on her committee. They've made several recommendations to the school board, and some of them are being carried out."

Proud of the changes

One of the changes Israel is proudest of is the establishment of a salad bar. It is now a once-a-week feature in the middle and high schools, and is occasionally also tried in the elementary schools. Very popular with students, the salad bar got an added boost when it was reviewed by a Philadelphia television news team and given a spot on the 6 o'clock news.

Another change is the addition of a variety of foods to the snack menu in one of the two kindergartens. Every day, 80 or so children get fruits or vegetables, or cheese and crackers, nuts, raisins, and different types of seeds, all of which Israel gets locally.

She intends to find volunteers to do the same for the other elementary school. "It's just such a pleasure . . . I find little tiny apples and plums and peaches, and I cut up carrot and celery sticks. The children are very sophisticated;



hours, but they do sell it after school. "I've become a watchdog," Israel sighs, "trying to monitor after-school candy sales. I feel very strongly about what they sell to children to make money for PTA or band uniforms or other programs for children."

Advice for other parents

Israel feels she has learned a lot from her work as a food activist. For one thing, she says, it is vital to make people see nutrition education as a major priority in the school. For another, it is important to establish good relations with the school authorities and to work as much as possible through regular channels. This avoids unwittingly going over heads in the chain of

command and alienating people. Feedback from parents is vital too, because it keeps you going. A real problem is convincing parents and authorities that their actions—or inaction—may be setting bad food habits for the children.

Horizons are opening for Israel because of her activity. She felt she came full circle recently when the publisher whose newsletter inspired hers asked her to write for him. And a PTA group in nearby Cherry Hill wants her to advise them on their nutrition efforts. She says she would be happy to answer any questions parents or other groups might have. Her address is: 3100 Pheasant Run, Cinnaminson, New Jersey 08077. Telephone: (609) 829-6458.

by Christopher Kocsis

they eat the vegetables with dips made with yogurt." In fact, she says, the kids are eating things that they wouldn't eat for their parents. Even little 5-year-olds are willing to try new foods.

The Cinnaminson schools no longer sell candy during school



Interested in getting involved?

Here are some ideas for classroom, parent, and community activities:

Ask a child to plan a lunch menu, with the help of a committee, and then name it after him or her—and serve it.

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Have a Food Day in the community.

Invite community groups and local dignitaries to school food fairs or special meals, and have the media there too.

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Ask the children to make a list of health problems they know of, and discuss how some of these problems might be aggravated or caused by poor diet.

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Schedule tours of the food service facilities, for both students and parents.

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Form student, parent, and community committees to help plan activities.

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Distribute school meal menus to children and parents, and publish them in local newspapers.

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Plant class gardens and feature the produce in school meals.

Enlist energetic kids to be clowns, witches, food groups, and so forth for your project. Solicit help with costumes from parents. Stores, banks, and other institutions are often glad to contribute in some way to a celebration. Don't forget the Chamber of Commerce and the Jaycees.

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Organize a "Girth Club" for students who want to lose weight. They can endorse low-calorie items on the school lunch menu.

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Bring the food service personnel to the fore, too, and invite them to speak at parent, student, teacher, and school board meetings.

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Involve different classes in planning or having special events. School clubs can easily be tied in to nutrition education.

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Write and distribute brochures explaining the school food service to parents.

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NUTRITION Education and Training

Ask the school district, libraries, and organizations for nutrition education materials such as filmstrips, posters, games, and general information.

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Have students invite their parents to lunch or breakfast, or invite them yourself. Solicit parent volunteers to take tickets, serve food, and so forth.

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Have tasting parties for new products and for new recipes using donated commodities. Include teachers, parents, and community leaders on the panel. Blindfold taste tests are fun with new and old foods, especially ones that seem to be fashionably unpopular. This is a fun way to introduce a salad bar.



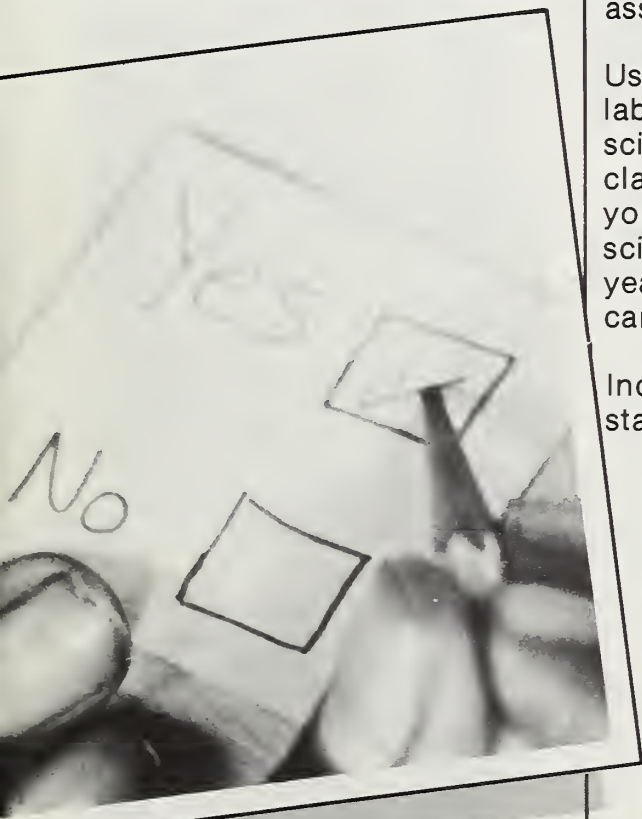
Contact your State department of education's nutrition education and training coordinator (most States have one), or the appropriate regional office of the Food and Nutrition Service, for suggestions and help.

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Establish a youth advisory council, a student food committee, or a parent food committee. Ask the PTA chapter and the State food service association for help.



Conduct student, parent, and teacher surveys before and after having activities or making changes. Students can help design the survey and analyze the results.



Analyze school meals for nutritional content—and several brown-bag lunches as well. Provide the results to parents.

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Consider how you might improve the cafeteria's ambience.

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Sponsor poster, recipe, and student advertising campaign contests.

Sponsor a Breadmaking Day on which a class gets to make, bake, and eat their own creations. Celebrate holidays with special menus.

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Identify school and community health professionals who can help you involve students and parents. These can include: the school nurse and dental hygienist; a local dietitian, pediatrician, family practitioner; staff members of a nutrition, medical, or agricultural college; or a member of a local or State home economics or dietetic association.

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Use the cafeteria as a learning laboratory for school subjects—science, social studies, and health classes are naturals. For instance, you can supply food samples to a science class to show how seeds, yeast, or molds grow. Foreign foods can involve students in research.

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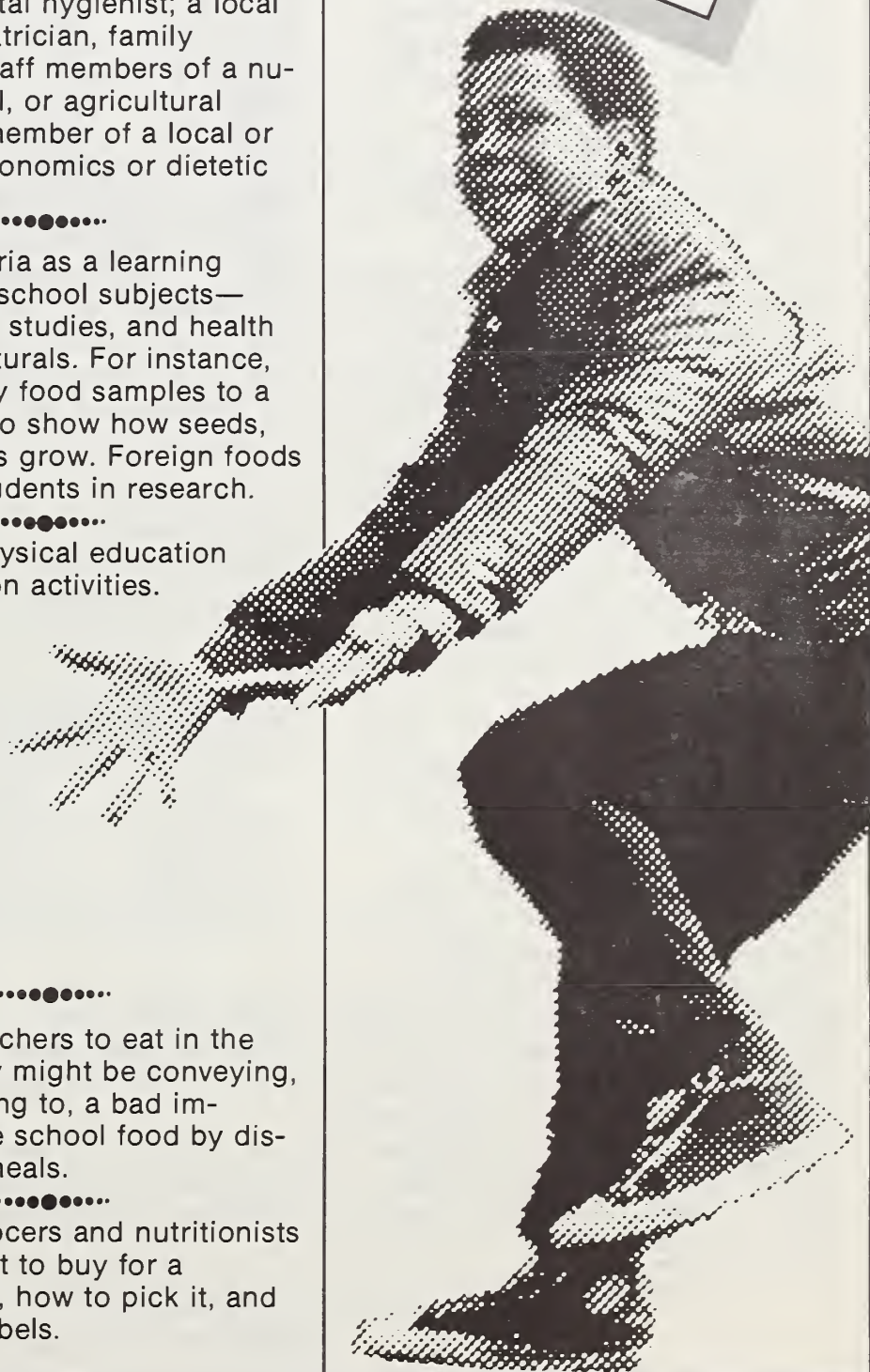
Include the physical education staff in nutrition activities.

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Encourage teachers to eat in the cafeteria. They might be conveying, without meaning to, a bad impression of the school food by disappearing at meals.

.....

Invite local grocers and nutritionists to explain what to buy for a balanced meal, how to pick it, and how to read labels.



For more information...

Parents in South Bend, Indiana, have built a community nutrition education program from scratch, beginning with small donations from the local PTA and a local medical group. They have sponsored parent-school-community workshops, set up displays at shopping malls, and founded a one-page newsletter, called **Apple Press**.

The newsletter is popular with schools, doctors, churches, and parents. It contains ideas for wholesome and attractive snacks and meals, suggestions on food buys, and kudos to stores and other institutions who have contributed to nutrition awareness. The editor is Sue Christensen, and her address is: 1304 Leeper Ave., South Bend, Indiana 46617. Subscriptions are \$3.00 per school year.

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The Cooperative Food Education Program in Nashville has published a 104-page guide to nutrition education for children. Called **Eclipse of the Blue Moon**, it contains classroom-tested activities, recipes and information on food preparation, processing, labeling, advertising, and health maintenance. It is available for \$7.95 plus 60 cents for postage. There is also a student workbook for \$1.95, plus 60 cents postage. Write: Cooperative Food Education Program, 2606 Westwood Drive, Nashville, Tennessee 37204.

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A manual for citizen action to improve school meals has been published jointly by the Children's Foundation and the Center for Science in the Public Interest. Called **Eating Better at School**, it tells how to rate a food service and how to organize a quality campaign. It includes descriptions of successful campaigns and model programs. The price is \$2 per copy from either the Center for Science in the Public Interest, 1755 S Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009, or The Children's Foundation, 1420 New York Avenue, N.W., Suite 800, Washington, D.C. 20005.

The **Food and Nutrition Service** publishes a variety of publications on school food service programs and nutrition, including handouts, posters, and flyers. These publications can help inform students and parents about the school lunch program and related nutrition activities. For a list of available publications, write: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Legislative Affairs and Public Information, Food and Nutrition Service, Washington, D.C. 20250.

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You can also get information and materials from the **Food and Nutrition Information and Educational Resources Center**, Room 304, National Agricultural Library, Beltsville, Maryland 20705. Telephone: (202) 344-3719.

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Private organizations and companies can also be sources of helpful materials. Here are some organizations and companies you may want to contact. Inclusion in this list does not mean endorsement of any association, company, or brand by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

American School Food Service Association
Publications Department
4101 East Iliff Avenue
Denver, Colorado 80222

American Dietetic Association
430 North Michigan Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60611

American Home Economics Association
2010 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Nutrition Foundation, Inc.
Office of Education and Public Affairs
888 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

Society for Nutrition Education
2140 Shattuck Avenue, Suite 1110
Berkeley, California 94704

Florida Department of Citrus
P.O. Box 148
Lakeland, Florida 33802

General Mills, Inc.
Education Services
Department of Public Services
9200 Wayzata Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55426

Green Giant Company
Hazeltine Gates Office Park
5601 Green Valley Drive
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55431

Carnation Company
Food Service Division
5045 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, California 90036

National Dairy Council
6300 North River Road
Rosemont, Illinois 60018

Kansas Wheat Commission
1021 North Main Street
Hutchinson, Kansas 67501

Kraft Consumer Service
500 Peshtigo Court
Chicago, Illinois 60690

American Dental Association
211 E. Chicago Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60611

American Dental Hygienist Association
34th Floor
444 N. Michigan Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60611

American Heart Association
8HA National Center
7300 Greenville Avenue
Dallas, Texas 75251

The Children's Foundation
Suite 800
1420 New York Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005

Center for Science in the Public Interest
1755 S Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Food Research and Action Center
2011 Eye Street, N.W., 7th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20006

by Christopher Kocsis

Got a Problem? Call Out the Kids!



Why do kids waste food? A Portland, Maine, school principal decided to look for some answers to that question — and came up with some interesting results. The following article tells how students, teachers and food service workers helped with the lunch and snack-time experiments at the school. The first part of the article is excerpted from Portland's **Evening Express**, March 28, 1980. We've added the subheads.

If you have a tough job to do—like conserving food and the money it costs to buy it—call out the kids.

This winter, Principal Richard McGarvey decided too much food was winding up in the garbage cans after lunch at Reiche School.

He started a campaign called Stamp Out Food Waste. And the first thing he did was ask the older students in the elementary school to help him.

By the time a complex survey and schoolwide experiment ended in January, food waste at Reiche had been cut just about in half . . . [and] officials at Reiche [had] found . . . [the problem] wasn't the food itself as much as a lack of choice . . .

Began with waste study

. . . McGarvey and Portland Food Service Director William Verrill and the 4th, 5th and 6th grade pupils picked one week in December for their experiment.

For those five days, Verrill's staff weighed all the food before it was shipped to Reiche from the prepack kitchen at Nathan Clifford School.

At the other end, the older kids were each assigned to a different table of eight or 10 pupils. After lunch, they collected each plate and made sure the uneaten food was carefully scraped into a garbage can for further tabulation.

Then the waste was weighed and matched against the amount coming in.

By the end of the week a pattern emerged revealing that an average of 11 percent of the hot food served at Reiche wasn't being eaten.

On a typical day during that week in December, 403 pounds of macaroni and cheese, green beans, tomato wedges, fresh bananas and milk came into the dining room, and 58 pounds went into the garbage can, for a waste rate of 14 percent.

“It was important to have the kids involved and it was educational, too. They learned about nutrition, and that wasting food—or anything—in today’s society is something we can no longer keep doing.”

It’s unfair to think children will eat everything you give them. They have varied styles. They learn about different foods in different ways, at home, at school, in friends’ homes.”

Tested some new choices

In the meantime, Verrill designed a nutritious cold lunch option, including youthful favorites such as peanut butter and jelly and egg salad sandwiches along with cheese wedges and carrot sticks to fill out the balanced diet requirements.

The experiment moved on to a week in January. Students were allowed to choose the hot or the cold lunch the previous day from a menu they could take home. . . This served two purposes. It helped the food service people plan a precise number of optional, simple sandwich meals for the next day. Also, parents could see what the kids had chosen for lunch the next day, hot or cold, and plan an evening meal accordingly.

At the end of the week when the kids were offered either the cold bag lunch or a hot lunch, wasted food dropped to an average of 6 percent, down by almost half from the waste total in the no-option test.

On one of those days, for instance, the hot macaroni and cheese meal with the option of a peanut butter and jelly sandwich meal weighed in at 437 pounds. The waste going out was 24 pounds,

with the food wasting rate down to 5 percent instead of 14 percent.

Reiche School decided to go with a hot-cold option the rest of the school year because it does cut down on waste.

But the original survey showed some hot meals are very popular, so a substitute isn’t offered when these meals are served.

For instance, on days when pepperoni pizza or turkey dinner with gravy is on the menu, there is no choice and the waste is minimal.

And those meals include things like green beans and tossed salad that kids aren’t supposed to like.

Results were interesting

The project exposed some myths, McGarvey said.

It simply isn’t true that the youngsters in kindergarten and first grade mess around with their food and don’t eat. They tend to “waste” more because they can’t eat as much as bigger kids, the survey found.

McGarvey said he is pleased with the survey results.

“It’s unfair to think children will eat everything you give them. They have varied eating styles. They learn about different foods in different ways, at home, at school, in friends’ homes.

“It was important to have the kids involved and it was educational too. They learned about nutrition, and that wasting food—or anything—in today’s society is something we can no longer keep doing . . . ”

McGarvey said he and the teachers at Reiche are convinced small appetites are sometimes cut before mealtime with snack foods the kids bring with them to school. Not surprisingly, the next project is known as the campaign to Stamp Out Too Much Snacking.

*Portland Evening Express
March 28, 1980*



The snacking project got underway in March, and McGavey approached it as systematically as he had the waste problem. First, to find out what kind of snacks the kids were eating, he asked all the teachers at Reiche to fill out a "snack assessment" sheet for 1 week in March, without alerting the children to the survey. Results showed that approximately 50 percent of the kids were bringing nutritious snacks and 50 percent were not.

With the help of interested teachers, McGarvey then worked to make nutritious snacking lessons part of the children's classroom activities. When studying math, for instance, instead of counting numbers, the children counted fruits, vegetables and other foods.

Got parents involved, too

At the same time, McGarvey appealed to parents in a regular once-a-month newsletter on school activities. He let them know that many kids were stopping at the corner store on the way to school and spending their money on non-nutritious snacks. In response, parents formed a council that had as a major project talking to local food store owners about setting up displays of nourishing snacks.

One store, directly across from the school, has been particularly helpful to teacher Shawn Perry and her students in the special needs program for grades 2-6. Once a month, Perry's students purchase a month's supply of peanut butter

from the store. The store, in turn, donates "gorp"—a combination of dried fruits and nuts, unsalted peanuts and sunflower seeds for special treats. Students eat the peanut butter on crackers during morning recess.

McGarvey said he has seen some changes in kids' snacking habits since the project began. Nuts, fresh and dried fruits, oatmeal cookies, raw vegetables, and yogurt are among the kids' new favorites.

Robert Hart, grade 2, brings carrots and apples for his morning recess snack. Fifth grader Scott Craigie said he likes watermelon, yogurt, and raisins. "I like to eat foods that won't hurt my teeth," Scott said.

Food service staff helped

School food service director Bill Verrill has been very helpful. For example, when the kids were reading a story called "Blueberries for Sal," Verrill had his cafeteria workers prepare desserts and breakfast muffins using fresh blueberries.

Verrill has been food service director for 8 years and has been

working closely with a nutrition committee since 1977. The committee meets monthly and includes parents, teachers, students, school board members, the city dental hygienist, and doctors, nurses and dietitians. At any one time, the group has about 20 members.

Verrill feels the work of the committee "keeps him on his toes." Last year, the group worked with the school food service staff to reduce the use of sugar, fat and salt in school meals. They also worked to get more fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole grain products on the menus.

Verrill's advice to other food service directors is to be open to the work of such committees. "Let them rip your program apart, analyze it and slowly put it back together," he says, "They are really on your side."

Also, he says, "Get out of the kitchen and be a public relations person. Get to know your students, their parents, and the community. Have confidence in your good workers who have a sincere interest in the growth of the children. And educate the children with healthy food."

Educating the children with healthy food was exactly what the waste and snacking projects were about. And from the comments of the children, they got the message. "It's important to eat good food and not to waste," said first grader Zak Porter, age 7, adding, "Some kids starve every day in places in the world."

by Patricia O'Reilly Berkowitz



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